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EDITH STEIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY: ON SELF-FORMATION AND VALUE-MODIFICATION

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One defining claim that critical phenomenologists make of the critical phenomenological method is that description no longer simply plays the role of detailing the world around the describing phenomenologist, but rather has the potential to transform worlds and persons.[1] The transformative potential of the critical phenomenological enterprise is motivated by aspirations of social and political transformation. Critical phenomenology accordingly takes, as its starting point, descriptions of the oppressive historical social structures and contexts that have shaped our experience and shows how these produce inequitable ways of being in the world (Guenther 2020, 12). For example, critical phenomenologists have provided rich descriptions of marginalized lived experience, particularly racialized experience (Ngo 2017; Yancy 2017), dis-abled experience and experiences of illness (Lajoie and Douglas 2020; Toombs 1993), gendered experience (Beauvoir 2009; Salamon 2010), and so forth. What is common across these accounts is the assumption that these descriptions provide means of enacting political change. First, they illuminate the existence of oppressive structures and their effects upon us, our possibilities, and our relations. Second, through increasing awareness they begin to denaturalize the oppressive historical structures that "privilege, naturalize, and normalize certain experiences of the world while marginalizing, pathologizing, and discrediting others" (Guenther 2020, 15). Third, through strategic responses (e.g., hesitation in Alia Al-Saji's work), they produce new possibilities of action and experience, which initiates the process of creating different ways of being in the world (Al-Saji 2014).[2]

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[1] Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers and the editorial team at *Puncta* for their helpful suggestions and feedback.

[2] When I call Al-Saji's concept of hesitation a strategic response that produces new possibilities for action and experience, I am following Al-Saji's proposal that hesitation is a way to interrupt racializing perception (2014). According to Al-Saji, racializing perception overdetermines racialized bodies through a mechanism of othering. When the tacit perceptual practices that sustain racialized perception become habitual, the process of racializing others via perception proceeds very rapidly. Racializing perception occurs faster than thought, which means that critical anti-racist intervention needs to occur at the level of perception itself. Hesitating becomes a way to slow down our perception in order to make it responsive to what it encounters and to also open up a space for critically assessing its features (147).

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Critical phenomenological description thus provides a richer sense of how our experience is not neutral but is shaped by oppressive systems of power. A richer sense of how power shapes lived experience can—and should—motivate different ways of living. As Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, and Gayle Salamon (2020) write, critical phenomenology is "an ameliorative phenomenology that seeks *not only to describe but also to repair the world,* encouraging generosity, respect, and compassion for the diversity of our lived experiences" (xiv, author's emphasis). Or as Lisa Guenther (2020) similarly claims, "as a transformative political practice, critical phenomenology must go beyond a description of oppression, developing concrete strategies for dismantling oppressive structures and creating or amplifying different, less oppressive, and more liberatory ways of Being-in-the-world" (16).

In these regards, critical phenomenologists have effectively used descriptions of historical and social structures to show how those structures shape our experiences, possibilities, and subjectivities. Given this, I contend that much of this work has focused on how power—manifested from the outside and then internalized—structures our existence by producing oppressive ways of living. But are we entirely shaped by these external structures? After all, if critical phenomenology assumes that we can make changes to established practices, even at the level of the structure of experience and the form of subjectivity itself, then what makes it possible for us to decide that we might want to live differently in the first place? What changes must take place within us to motivate us to try and live differently, and what must we do to follow through with our desire for change?

To explore these questions, I suggest that Edith Stein's account of the person, with its capacity for self-formation, ought to be recuperated by critical phenomenology. Stein's description of self-formation through value modification provides a model for thinking about how we become ourselves. From Stein, we learn that the values we hold shape who we are insofar as they motivate our feelings, actions, and desires, and thus compose our personal characteristics. As each of us are personally defined by the values we hold and how we comport ourselves towards those values, for Stein, all persons should be understood as valuing beings. However, persons also have a "developmental character" [*Entwicklungscharakter der Menschen*], which means that we are not fixed in our values; we can confirm, reject, revise, or adopt values (1994).[3]

In what follows, I examine the question of how we can decide to live differently in the first place. In section one, I explore how Edith Stein's thinking of self-formation is a useful contribution to critical phenomenological projects, insofar as it allows us to bring to light the role that values play in structuring our actions, feelings, and desires, as well as how value modification can change how we live by changing who we are. Drawing on *On the Problem of Empathy* (1989), *Philosophy of Psychology and Humanities* (2000), *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person*

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[3] The developmental character of the human is due in part to one's personal freedom. While we are never determined from without because we have the power to choose how to behave and what to value, we are also not self-generated but are shaped by our contexts and circumstances. In this way, for Stein, the person is free, but this freedom is limited and situated. In other words, the person develops in the tension between self-formation and determining forces.

(1994), and *Essays on Woman* (1996), I show how, according to Stein, we are persons with personalities, we experience values in the world, and we can take up attitudes towards what we experience.[4] Our personal development involves self-formation, in which we decide who we want to be and how we want to live by modifying our values. Importantly, however, this process is possible only through empathy, which means that self-formation is not the project of an individual who is alone in the world and entirely self-generated but is instead intersubjectively grounded. Because we empathize with the other, we can bring ourselves into relief and establish what is mine and what is other. When empathizing with another in this way, we can discover how we appear to them through a mechanism Stein names "reiterative empathy." From this, we form an image of ourselves in the world and these images deepen or challenge our self-knowledge and provide the impetus for the personal development that takes place in self-formation.

Having laid out Stein's account of the person and the role values play in self-formation, and in order to illustrate what this account can show us, I next apply Stein's account to Iris Marion Young's now-classic account of inhibited feminine bodily comportment.[5] In section two, I first examine Young's account of how sexist oppression motivates certain behavior by instituting and sustaining bodily habits. I show what is gained through a critical focus on power structures in Young's phenomenological description, namely, a robust illustration of how patriarchal forces operate to produce white, heterofeminine comportment. With an eye towards questioning how we should respond to Young's account, I suggest that it follows from Young's essay that we can change how some persons experience living through their bodies by changing bodily habits. I further claim, however, that fully understanding how persons can develop themselves in the face of a patriarchal world requires us to go beyond a consideration of habits, by also questioning what makes it possible for us to decide that we might want to live differently in the first place.

I then bring Stein's arguments for self-formation to bear on the problem of responding to inhibited feminine bodily comportment in order to show how Stein's account of value-modification contributes to both elucidating how inhibited feminine bodily comportment is experienced and provides tools to get beyond this way of living. Here, I illustrate the process of value modification and show the role this process plays in supporting the personal development needed to change bodily habits and open new possibilities for girls and women.

In the third and final section, I position the project of value-modification as a useful tool for critical phenomenology, insofar as it provides concrete means for realizing the transformative promise of critical phenomenology. I suggest that Stein's theory can fruitfully show how it is that we can decide to live differently and, thus, begin the work of pushing back against oppressive structures that naturalize certain ways of living and experiencing.

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[4] Due to Edith Stein's elaborate conceptual apparatus, one frequently sees Stein scholars provide evidence for claims made in the body of an article in extensive footnotes. To maintain the flow of this article, I adopt this convention throughout the article.

[5] The presumed white heterofeminity of Young's work must be acknowledged. As Susan K. Cahn (2015) has shown in "'Cinderellas' of Sport: Black Women in Track and Field," feminine bodily comportment has always been raced and classed. Accordingly, Young's description applies only to a select few.

I. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AS VALUE MODIFICATION: EDITH STEIN ON SELF-FORMATION

The person is a central theme of Stein's writings.[6] In what follows, I limit my discussion of Stein's concept of the person to three central ideas: first, a consideration of empathy as a condition of self-formation; second, the role values play in shaping our personality and our behavior; and third, the process of value modification as self-formation. As I show, for Stein, empathy is the condition of possibility for self-formation, and thus, the development of our personalities over the course of our lives. By providing us not only with knowledge of the other, but also of ourselves, empathy allows us to actively shape who we become. In this way, we initially learn to reflect upon ourselves as we are in the world with others through empathy. Ultimately, from Stein, we learn that choosing our values shapes how we live by influencing our behavior and desires.

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ON EMPATHY AS A CONDITION OF SELF-FORMATION

Stein's phenomenological exploration of empathy in her dissertation, *On the Problem of Empathy*, paints a picture of empathy that departs from our colloquial understanding of the term.[7] While our working cultural understanding of empathy tends to name our experience of feeling another person's feelings, and thereby understanding their experience, Stein's account of empathy portrays a more fundamental act. That is, empathy is a fundamental act whereby the experience of others is comprehended by us as other. Thus, while for Stein empathy does involve feeling into another's experience, it more importantly names our experience of becoming aware of another person's experience *as* other than our own *within*

[6] Many elements that arise in Stein's discussions of the person are familiar to critical phenomenologists. For example, Stein writes in *Essays on Woman* that the human being is always being in the world (Stein 1996), a theme which becomes a guiding thread for phenomenological research, especially in Martin Heidegger (1923), Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1945), and Emmanuel Levinas (1961). In addition, Stein anticipates some discussions on the nature of the body found in Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*. Finally, Stein emphasizes time and again the primacy of intersubjectivity, be it in her phenomenological descriptions of empathy or her descriptions of our experience of larger social and political realities, for example, the social relations of the mass, society, and community.

[7] The translated term empathy is *Einfühlung* in the original German, which can be more literally translated as "feeling-into."

the flow of our own consciousness.[8] This experience is fundamental for understanding ourselves as well as others in the world.[9]

In this regard, empathy is a unique perceptual act for Stein. It is similar to outer perception, or perception of external objects, insofar as both empathy and outer perception intend an object that is given in a here and now (i.e., the experience of this other person who is presently in front of me).[10] However, empathy differs from outer perception insofar as what is intended is given as belonging to someone else (i.e., it is *their* experience, not *mine*) (1989, 6-7, 10-11). In other words, the other's experience given in empathy does not emerge from my "I."[11] For example, let us say that I am in line at a grocery store. The person directly to my left appears impatient. Their arms are crossed, and their toes are tapping as they shift their weight restlessly. They cast their gaze about as they compare the various check-out lines to estimate which one will have the shortest wait time. Through empathy, I perceive their impatience without participating in it myself, and in my perception of their impatience, I recognize that it is their experience—not mine—although I discover their experience in the flow of my own experience. In this regard, empathy allows me to experience the content of another person's experience as their experience (11). But empathy is not only limited to experiencing and knowing the experiences of another person.

Through empathy, we bring ourselves and our experience into relief with the experience of another, and in so doing we may also develop a richer sense of our own self as well as of our experience. If empathy is a form of perception that allows us to grasp another's experience, then through this process we come to knowledge of their experience. However, part of their experience includes *their* empathizing of *us*. The capacity to empathize another's experience of ourselves is what Stein (1989) names reiterative empathy (18). In reiterative empathy, we empathize the content of another person's empathized act, which can give us insight into their comprehension of us or of other persons. Say I am the one being empathized. In this case, I am a part of what the other has intended. Accordingly, when I grasp their experience through empathy, I also receive the part of their experience that includes their empathized experience of me. This means that when my empathy intends their experience, I am given their empathized content of my experience. Such content is, in short, their perception of my experience. In this way, reiterative empathy allows me to receive my original experience as an empathized one. The other has already constituted me as an individual based upon the psychic life exhibited by my bodily expressions and actions, and when I empathize their image of me, I see how I appear to them.

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[8] According to Stein (1989), sharing another person's feelings is an instance of "emotional contagion," not empathy (23).

[9] For Stein, empathy goes so far as to provide the ground for objective knowledge of the world (and thus enables the project of phenomenology to get off the ground). As Alasdair MacIntyre (2006) notes, Stein's work on empathy shows how Husserl's entire phenomenological enterprise depends upon a treatment of *Einfühlung*, for only via empathy is there a ground for knowledge of others, objects, world, and self (75-76). While this topic remains largely outside the scope of my paper, I contend that Stein's discussion of self-formation demonstrates how empathy is a condition for self-formation thanks to how it both creates a space for critical self-reflection and also provides the material we work with while self-reflecting.

[10] Stein (1989) defines outer perception as "acts in which spatio-temporal concrete being and occurring come to me in embodied givenness" (6). For example, perception of external objects happens through outer perception. The object is spatially and temporally present to me. When I perceive it, I immediately perceive one of its embodied aspects.

[11] Stein (1986) further explains this point with two distinctions: (1) the distinction between what is primordial and non-primordial, as well as (2) between act and content. What is primordial is what is immediately given within experience. For example, outer perception yields spatio-temporal objects immediately (6). Non-primordial experience involves what is not immediately given in experience. Memories are good examples of non-primordial experience, because while a memory recalls something that was once primordial, it is now only represented in experience (7). Empathy is a unique phenomenon because it is both primordial and non-primordial. It is a primordial *act*, insofar as the act occurs as present experience (10). However, the *content* of this act is non-primordial because this content is lived experience not immediately issuing from my "I" (rather, it issues from another person's I).

Reiterative empathy is key for self-awareness and self-knowledge. Inner perception can only give us part of the picture of our being. For example, by virtue of reflecting upon our experience, we discover that we are embodied beings who live in the world. We are oriented spatially, experience sensations, and are expressive. However, the empathized image of ourselves as given in reiterative empathy provides a much fuller sense of who we are, insofar as it allows us to see ourselves as we appear to others. We can then compare our inner experience of ourselves with how we appear to others, which provides us with multiple viewpoints on ourselves. Diversifying our viewpoints on ourselves can help us to become aware of instances of self-deception on the one hand and can provide the ground for correcting the perceptions others have of us on the other.[12] Say, for example, that I have recently donated funds to a charitable organization. I might consider this act of seeming good will an altruistic act and think that it suggests that I have a giving disposition. However, the content of reiterative empathy may suggest an alternative interpretation of my character based upon this same act: namely, that my charitable donation is the result of a psychological egoism that seeks validation from performing acts of apparent good will. Through reiterative empathy I can then discover my own self-deception. Alternately, perhaps I compare this data with my own experience of myself and conclude that while it may appear to others that I was not giving altruistically, I did indeed have altruistic motivations. Whatever the result, when I compare the information received through inner perception and empathic perception, I come to a richer sense of who I am. These two sources of self-knowledge can thus complexify, correct, and confirm my self-perception.

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[12] We can receive damaging images of ourselves from others. The other does not perceive us neutrally but inserts us into a pre-existing framework, one which defines in advance how we are to be interpreted. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon (2008) powerfully illustrates the violence that can happen when racialized and colonized individuals are returned to themselves. In the fifth chapter, Fanon describes the experience of being given to himself by the white child who objectifies him, leading to the collapse of his body schema and the installation of a racial epidermal schema. In this gesture, "my body was returned to me spread-eagled, disjointed, redone, draped in mourning on this white winter's day" (93). He is "overdetermined from the outside . . . A slave not to the 'idea' others have of me, but to my appearance" (95). Bringing Stein into the conversation here suggests that images of ourselves from others are received through the mechanism of reiterative empathy.

There is an additional way in which reiterative empathy can increase self-knowledge. As Sarah Borden (2003) argues, when we grasp another's view of us, we create an opportunity to realize latent personal possibilities (30). One such personal possibility involves the development of character traits. Through reiterative empathy, we may discover ourselves to be lacking certain traits, but this discovery itself may motivate us to develop those traits. Consider the example of courage to clarify this point. When I see an individual exhibit courage, the self-understanding that arises from my reiterated empathy of their experience may show me the lack of courage in my current character. However, we may also discover in us an ability to become courageous. Following this, then, I may be able to realize courage as a character trait arising from this encounter. In short, the empathic encounter provides us with an opportunity for critical self-reflection, especially when it comes to elucidating self-deception. Such critical self-reflection enables the possibility for realizing latent personal possibilities, especially with regards to the development of different character traits.

By enabling the possibility of critical self-reflection and self-evaluation, empathy plays a crucial role in allowing for self-growth. Empathy is thus a ground for self-formation. But what else is involved in self-formation? In the next section, I explore values as the second component of self-formation. There can be no self-formation without values, since self-formation develops our personality and our personality is both disclosed by and constituted through our values.

THE PLACE AND ROLE OF VALUES IN PERSONALITY AND BEHAVIOR

In Stein's (1989) view, each person has a personality and an ability to value. The human ability to value is so crucial a feature to understanding specific persons (as well as to understanding the concept of the person in general), that in *On the Problem of Empathy* Stein writes: "it is impossible to formulate a doctrine of the person . . . without a value doctrine, and that the person can be obtained from such a value doctrine" (108). Similarly, in *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (2000), she notes that "as it were, we see what the person *is* when we see which world of value she lives in, which values she is responsive to, and what achievements she may be creating, prompted by values" (227). Hence, to grasp how Stein understands who we as individuals are, as well as how we act and how we feel, we must examine our values to see how they structure our behavior and personality. In what follows, first, I briefly review how Stein understands values. Second, I show how our personal values are revealed in emotional experiences and in experiences of willing. Third, I consider how values come to constitute persons, such that we can be understood through them.

While Stein never defines her use of the term "value," she does describe the experience of valuing, in which we grasp values through feelings. For Stein, there is no such thing as a value-free world. Each time we constitute an object through perception, we simultaneously constitute the value of that object. We can abstract into a theoretical stance, in which case objects can appear as mere things, but otherwise we are always axiologically oriented, which means that we discover things through their values: be those aesthetic, ethical, or religious values (160). In being axiologically oriented, we are attuned to experience through feeling, and those feelings disclose values to us.[13] As Íngrid Vendrell-Ferran (2017) writes, "on Stein's view, in the same sense that perceiving makes accessible the objects of the physical world such as colors and sounds, the act of feeling makes values accessible to us" (76). An example is helpful here. When I perceive a maple tree in autumn in a cooler climate, after its foliage has begun to change but before the leaves have fallen, I don't just see the tree as an object; rather, I am struck by the *beauty* of the tree. The beauty inspires various feelings, perhaps of gladness, awe, and peace. The beauty is the value of the tree; the feelings of joy, awe, and peace are what disclose the beauty of the maple tree and show how we value it.

Now that we understand how Stein envisions values in a general sense, and specifically how values are revealed through our feelings, we can look more closely at how our personal values are discovered in our emotional experiences. To understand this, let us consider Stein's comparison of our feelings over three different kinds of loss. She suggests that our feeling of anger over a lost piece of jewelry is likely more superficial than the feeling that we experience when we lose jewelry that was a souvenir from a loved one. The latter feeling penetrates more deeply than the former. Deeper still, however, would be our pain over the loss of the loved one themselves. This is because the loved one is more deeply valued than their jewelry, and their jewelry is more deeply valued than a different piece of jewelry: a fact disclosed by the difference between our feelings. Hence, as Stein writes (1989), "this [variation in our emotional experiences] discloses essential relationships among the hierarchy of felt values, the depth classification of value feelings, and the level classification of the person exposed in these feelings" (101). In other words, our value feelings not only reveal what values we personally hold, but, further, how we value those values. While both pieces of jewelry and the loved one were all valuable, they were valued in different ways, as was reflected by how the loss of each reached a different level in us.[14]

Not only are our values discovered in experiences of feelings; they are also discovered in experiences of willing, or the activity of the free will. We discover our values in what we will because willing is based on feeling, and feelings are grounded on values (Stein

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[13] Technically speaking, Stein distinguishes between the act of grasping values and the feeling of values. As Íngrid Vendrell-Ferran (2017) points out, this allows Stein to explain instances when we are aware of a value without fully feeling it (77-78). For example, having witnessed the joy soap operas give my grandmother, I am aware of their value, but I do not personally feel their value. In this paper, I am interested exclusively in instances where we are made aware of personal values through feeling.

[14] Stein (1989) will argue that our value hierarchies and our value feelings are rationally grounded and, further, that there are possible "right" or "wrong" ways of being ordered in these regards. Poorly ordered hierarchies are reflective of irrationality, and properly ordered hierarchies are reflective of rationality. As she writes, "if someone is 'overcome' by the loss of his wealth … he feels irrational" (101). Presumably, this is because the loss of wealth should not be such a deep loss that it overcomes us and leaves us feeling entirely bereft, and that if we are so overcome, then our values are not well-ordered.

1989, 108).[15] This means that willing discloses our values because our action is motivated by our values.[16] Our actions do not occur from out of nowhere, but instead emerge from a meaning context. This meaning context Stein names motivation. Motivation is the temporal connection between acts that structures the unique flow of our experience (40-41). Motivation structures the arising of experiences by motivating each act, one out of the other. In this regard, because our actions are motivated, they arise out of our history of prior acts, and are meaningful based on that history. While motivation creates a strong connectivity between acts, it does not necessitate our action, as we also experience an element of freedom understood as a commitment to the doing on our part (55).[17] This means that actions are motivated *and* include a "fiat!," that is, an "inner jolt" or an impulse that is not itself motivated (2000, 55, 57). Willed actions thus reflect our values because our values motivate actions, and further, because our actions involve an inner commitment to those motivating values.

The concepts of motivation and value explain how we understand persons. Everyone's psychic life is structured as the flow of motivations that specifically pertains to them. Because their values are their motives, everything someone does or feels reflects their personally held values. Hence, as Marianne Sawicki (2001) reflects, "we come to know unique persons through the unique patterns they create by their choices among rationally motivated options—or sometimes by their irrational refusals of them" (84). Or as Mette Lebech (2010) explains,

> [w]e experience concrete human persons to be carriers of value in a variety of ways. We evaluate their character, for example, which we constitute from our understanding of their value-response, in particular from the order in which we see them place the values, their value-hierarchy. The personality of a person is, according to Stein, the specificity of the person determined or stamped by its character… Personality is not however, like the person, pure spiritual capacity: it is this capacity as already determined in certain ways by typical or decisive value responses… The personality reflects the

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[15] "This feeling of value is the source of all cognitive striving and 'what is at the bottom' of all cognitive willing" (Stein 1989, 108).

[16] "Motivation, in our general sense, is *the* connection that acts get into with one another: not a mere blending like that of simultaneously or sequentially ebbing phases of experiences, or the associative tying together of experiences, but an *emerging* of the one *out of* the other, a self fulfilling or being fulfilled of the one *on the basis of* the other *for the sake of* the other" (Stein 2000, 41). As psychic causality, motivation is similar to natural causality insofar as it functions to create a coherence in psychic reality, but it differs from natural causality because it does not involve necessity. All our mental acts are motivated and thus their emergence creates a meaning context.

[17] "But the availability of motives does not *compel* the ego to accomplish the acts in question. These acts do not simply impose themselves on grounds of motives, as attitudes to. The ego can have and acknowledge the motives and it can abstain from the acts in spite of that" (Stein 2000, 55).

> choices of the person and marks what he has done with himself as a person; it is the source of the specificity of the person's spontaneity and the first expression of the person's creativity as such. (147-48)

Because every person is a carrier of values, every person can be understood through the way they respond to their values. Every individual has their unique set of values and their unique way of classifying values, and it is through how they respond to those values that you can come to know who they are. When it comes to our own values, we aren't immediately aware of our values but can discover them through reflection upon our feelings and our actions. This is especially the case regarding values we have picked up without even realizing it. We might even discover that we hold different values than we thought when we empathize with others and see our actions and expressions from their perspective. In any case, our values as motives produce the unique way each of us have of realizing values. Our unique ways of realizing our values thus becomes our style of living.

For these reasons, we are not immediately transparent to ourselves, but need self-reflection and, more specifically, empathic experiences with others to discover our values. As we saw earlier, reiterative empathy provides the opportunity for self-evaluation by way of increasing self-knowledge and enabling self-critique. Hence, reiterative empathy can become the ground for evaluating our values. As Stein (1989) writes:

> [w]e not only learn to make ourselves into objects, as earlier, but through empathy with "related natures," i.e., persons of our type, what is "sleeping" in us is developed. By empathy with differently composed personal structures we become clear on what we are not, what we are more or less than others. Thus, together with self knowledge, we also have an important aid to self evaluation. Since the experience of value is basic to our own value, at the same time as new values are acquired by empathy, our own unfamiliar values become visible. When we empathically run into ranges of value closed to us, we become conscious of our own deficiency or disvalue. Every comprehension of different persons can become the basis of an understanding of value. (116)

Through empathy, we measure ourselves against the other and discover values we hold as well as values we do not. We see ourselves and others as persons, or as value-creating or value-holding beings. We discover our personality through acts of empathy and are given the opportunity to create or reject those values based upon that discovery. Accordingly, it is only through experiences of empathy as well as critical self-reflection that we can begin the process of explicit self-formation that can enable value confirmation, rejection, modification, or adoption. To explain this claim further, let us now turn to an explanation of self-formation through value-modification for Stein.

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ON SELF-FORMATION THROUGH VALUE-MODIFICATION

We have already seen how values shape our personalities; what remains to be shown is how—and to what extent—we can choose our values and thus participate in forming our personalities.[18] As Antonio Calcagno (2014) puts it, "Stein claims that, in choosing certain values, we become aware that these values affect and structure who we are; they shape certain of our attributes and help to structure and unfold what Stein calls our personality" (99-100). For Stein, once we become aware of the role values play in informing our personalities, we can actively participate in value creation. Because the ego is the "boss" of its own experience, it can confirm, reject, or adopt a value on the basis of information received in the course of experience (2000, 52). From this, pertinent value feelings arise, as do desires and actions: "The grasping of a value can motivate a disposition (for example, joy in beauty) and, accordingly, a wanting and doing (perhaps the realizing of a state of affairs recognized as morally right)" (42). In this way, discovering our values through our value feelings can motivate us to choose or reject values, and through this activity, we actively participate in choosing our own personal attributes and thereby shaping our personality.

More specifically, we can participate in shaping our comportment toward our own values through our attitudes.[19] Attitudes occur to me based upon how I take up the object of an experience (Stein 2000, 48). I am passive in the face of attitudes; they seize me. However, Stein notes that we can "take a stance" toward attitudes. We can accept or deny them. That is,

> I can "take a stance" toward the attitude, in a new sense. I can accept it, plant my feet upon it, and declare my allegiance to it; or, I can comport myself negatively against it. Suppose I accept it—that means that if it emerges in me I give myself over to it, joyously, without reluctance. Suppose I deny it—that doesn't mean I eliminate it. That's not under my control. "Canceling out" a belief would require new motives, through which the motives of the original

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[18] According to Stein (1989), if we don't choose to self-form, then we can't become ourselves in a genuine manner. Stein describes the possibility that we may feel and act according to how we are "supposed" to feel and act, and not from a genuine feeling. In this case, Stein would say that we haven't become ourselves. We aren't in touch with ourselves and have not become a personality. Nor have we assumed our freedom and our responsibility for that freedom (111).

[19] Stein (2000) does not explain the nature of attitudes [*Stellungnahme*, literally "position-taking"] as thoroughly as one might hope. Some examples of attitudes include the natural attitude and the phenomenological attitude, or even a romantic feeling towards someone (whether you assent to the feeling or struggle against it is another question). Stein (1996) also defines an ethos as a spiritual attitude and claims that an ethos is an inner-position taking with regards to values that provides an organizing form to the person's comportment. From various discussions, it seems that attitudes have a judgement component (insofar as they are position-takings on values); they are unwilled and involuntary; they are grounded on the value-object that motivates them; they have an affective dimension (or are at least inwardly related to affectivity); and they arise as "alive" and "operative" but can be rendered "inoperative." Clarifying fully Stein's concept of an attitude is a project for another paper.

> belief are invalidated and from which the cancellation is established instead "all by itself." But I need not acknowledge this belief. I can comport myself just as though it were not present; I can make it inoperative. (It is this, the comporting, that Husserl designated as *epochē*. The acts rendered inoperative are "neutralized." (49)

Adopting or denying an attitude is itself a motivated act (50). Accordingly, if I want to change how I comport myself in relation to a value, I can deny the attitude that the value motivates, and in this way, I push back against the feelings that the value arouses. To supplant the original attitude, the new attitude requires a motive that is either stronger or more deeply valued than the original value motive; merely eliminating the attitude is impossible. As Lebech (2015) writes, "[t]hat means I place one value as more important than another, or recognize in one value a higher motivating power than in the other" (37). This deeper value will become the stronger motive, and if repeatedly realized, will take on a formative role in shaping who we become over time, at least in part by eventually invalidating the original motive. In this way, we can revise our values through the stances we take toward our attitudes. In doing so we install new motives, themselves motivated by different values, and we designate these new values as more important than the preceding values.

Due to our capacity for value-modification, we experience (limited and situated) freedom for self-formation. We can choose the values to commit to and the ones to supplant. However, we are not entirely self-generated beings. We are shaped by what we encounter in empathic experiences. We are also shaped by the world we are born into and the structures we inherit in those worlds. Our bodies also present natural limits to our freedom. Similarly, our own personal histories both enable and restrict our options, insofar as they form the meaningful context from which our possibilities arise. The point I wish to make is that within these limitations, we have an ability to decide whether we want to be for or against the values, feelings, and actions that compose our lives and shape our personalities. In this, we confirm, reject, or adopt new values, and through this activity we decide how we want to comport ourselves towards our values.

Following Stein, then, our values shape how we behave and who we as persons are, which means that to change our behavior and our character, we need to change our values. In other words, in order to decide that we might want to change some of the habits that hold us back, we need not only to change our environments and adapt new behaviors, but also change the values we hold so that we can be motivated towards different actions in the first place. In order to illustrate this claim more thoroughly, in the following sections I put Young's account of inhibited feminine bodily intentionality into conversation with Stein's account of self-formation as value-modification.

II. HOW DO WE CHANGE INHIBITED FEMININE BODILY INTENTIONALITY? RECONCILING YOUNG AND STEIN

Many of us are familiar with Iris Marion Young's (1980) analysis in "Throwing like a Girl." In order to consider how feminine bodily comportment develops as a style of being, Young draws on Maurice Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the lived body—particularly as it pertains to the way the lived body aims toward the accomplishment of tasks—and Simone de Beauvoir's understanding of women's situation as a tension between immanence and transcendence. Summarizing Young's analysis is outside the scope of this paper, so I shall limit myself to discussing only a few of the main points.

According to Young, there is a typically feminine style of comportment, which is an inhibited style of comportment that does not make use of the body's full capabilities. Women hesitate when using their bodies, both because they lack confidence in their own bodily capacities and because they fear getting hurt. Accordingly, "[women] often experience [their] bodies as a fragile encumberance [*sic*], rather than the media for the enactment of [their] aims" (144). As a result, women "throw like girls": instead of bringing their whole bodies into action when throwing a ball, by drawing the arms apart and stepping forward into the throw, women focus their efforts on the wrist and elbow, flicking the ball in a general direction.

Young identifies several sources that encourage this behavior. In general, inhibited feminine comportment is due to women's situation—that is, her existence in a patriarchal society: "Insofar as we learn to live out our existence in accordance with the definition that patriarchal culture assigns to us," Young writes, "we are physically inhibited, confined, positioned, and objectified" (144). Young does indicate more specific sources, however. For example, she notes both negative and positive forms of socialization which encourage young girls to assume a feminine style of bodily comportment. Young girls (and women as well) are not given the opportunity to learn how to freely engage with the world through their whole bodies. This constrains their opportunities to develop confidence in their own bodies and capabilities. At the same time, girls are encouraged to behave in restrictive "feminine" ways. Such encouragement actively inhibits their movement, promotes a lack of confidence in their bodies, and redirects their focus onto other issues, such as how their bodies appear rather than of what they are capable. These two sources help create the habits that form the basis for feminine bodily comportment. We can see this in the play between young girls; their movement is encouraged to be sedentary and enclosing, and their activities encourage them to control the use of their bodies in specifically feminine ways (i.e., not getting dirty, sitting quiet and still, etc.). In short, girls are encouraged to live their bodies as objects and not as subjects.

While Young does not offer specific recommendations towards changing women's inhibited comportment, I propose that one response would be to encourage girls to relate to their bodies as subjects and to encourage them to build confidence in their bodily capacities. Encouraging girls to relate to their bodies as subjects can change sedimented habits of spatial self-enclosure or stop those habits from taking hold in the first place. Such encouragement is focused in part on bodily behavior and in part on creating environments that would encourage girls to stretch out and feel empowered to take up space. But is there more that goes into changing women's inhibited comportment than challenging and transforming bodily habits and changing environments? For example, why might we decide that we want to live differently in the first place, or want other girls and women to be able to choose to live differently? And how do we begin the process of living differently beyond changing bodily habits? What "inner" process precedes and supports our decision to modify our bodily habits?

This is indeed where Stein's account of self-formation becomes helpful. Stein's account of self-formation illustrates that our decisions about how we want to live are decisions about our values: particularly the relationship between our values, our personal characteristics, and our behaviors. Bringing this account into conversation with Young's insights shows that value-modification is a useful complement to Young's account, insofar as it details how the personal development required to change how we live takes place. To illustrate this more fully, let us take as a starting point Young's concept of inhibited feminine bodily comportment and examine it in the context of an example of someone riding a public bus. To this I apply Stein's account in order to show what her analysis contributes alongside Young's.

There are many ways those who have internalized values with regards to inhibited feminine bodily comportment can experience those values. For simplicity's sake, I will consider one scenario. The subject of our example is on a public bus. They sit with their legs and arms crossed and take up as little space as possible. They have internalized the value that it is good to be a "properly feminine person," which involves the set of expectations and norms that establish that properly feminine persons are small, quiet, and non-threatening. They have not yet in their lived experience encountered another set of values which would bring this value to light and demonstrate for them how it has structured their experience and character. Accordingly, the value remains invisible, but this does not lessen its motivational power; rather, this value lives in the various feelings it evokes (for example, subtle feelings of comfort when the subject meets the norm the value installs, as is the case in their present comportment on the bus, and feelings of discomfort when they do not) as well as the various actions it evokes (for example, the crossing of legs and arms). Then the subject of our example reads Young's essay and is deeply moved. Awed by the revelations they find in this text, for the first time they become aware of their own internalized value of inhibited feminine bodily comportment. They become further aware of how this value has expressed itself in their behavior, feelings, and desires, shaping their character and the sorts of possibilities they have perceived themselves capable of realizing. What is next for our subject?

The subject of our example has many possibilities. For instance, they may carry on as they previously have. This they may do so for numerous reasons. For example, their behavior would not change if they continued to accept the customary value of inhibited bodily comportment and in this way embrace an affirmative attitude toward it. Alternately, they may not truly affirm the value, but for any variety of reasons they may also choose not to supplant it. Certainly, various forms of bodily comportment may be unsafe for certain individuals and/or in certain situations, which could motivate someone to not supplant a new value or comport themselves differently with regards to their values. Or perhaps they do install a new value—that it is good for them to take up space—but this value does not take root deep enough in them to combat the motivating power of the initial value.

We can follow Stein's insights to understand at least part of what takes place if our subject does decide to install a new value. The subject may decide to contest their habitual way of comporting themselves as a way of contesting the value of inhibited feminine bodily comportment and the norm this value instills. They attempt to interrupt their own habits in order to change how they live and experience themselves and others in the world. In this case, the subject must install a new value (that it is good to take up space) deep enough that it can supplant the original value, which will motivate a new attitude. In so doing, they reject the old value and refuse acquiescence to their initial feelings, actions, and desires, which is to say they have taken a stance and assumed an attitude that denies the original value's motivating power. Then they have installed a new value, nurtured this value through an affirmative attitude, and embraced the feelings, actions, and desires that the new value motivates. This is what provided the impetus to change their habits in the first place and enables them to persist in this activity when the initial motivating surge of feelings that Young's essay motivated has worn off.

Bringing Stein's analysis into conversation with Young here shows how value modification can lead to personal development and supports the work of changing bodily habits. Through self-formation, a space to step back and assess ourselves and our lives is appropriated. This work allows us to creatively commit to our values, and to embrace our developmental character in a spirit that leads to us assuming our freedom and responsibility in self-formation. Modifying our values shapes who we are by shaping how we live.

It is crucial, however, not to overestimate one's freedom of choice when all our choices are shaped by formative forces. As mentioned before, Stein herself underscores how we are shaped by the worlds we are born into, by our empathic encounters with others, and by the experiences we have during our existence. In this way, insofar as she shows that the person is always intersubjective and shaped by material circumstances, her work complicates the received view that the classical phenomenological subject is individualistic. In various writings, Stein herself highlights the influence culture, gender, our bodies, personal history, interpersonal relationships, material circumstances, our inherent predispositions, and our bodies have on self-formation.[20] For Stein, while our egos are the boss of our experiencing, we are not the sole masters of our selves; our development is indebted to many formative forces, such that the agency we exert in our own formation is ultimately only one element in our development. Hence, while we *do* have freedom of choice in self-formation, we do not have the ultimate say in who we become, nor is it entirely clear at any point the extent to which the choices we find available to us are shaped from without.

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[20] For more on how culture, gender, history, material circumstances, and other influences shape our self-formative processes, see especially: *On the Problem of Empathy* (1989), *Philosophy of Psychology and the Humanities* (2000), *Der Aufbau der menschlichen Person* (1994), and *Essays on Woman* (1996).

III. STEIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO CRITICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

In conclusion, I return briefly to my initial claim that Stein's account of self-formation is a useful contribution to the critical phenomenological project. Through Stein's account, we begin to see just how it is that someone can decide to live differently and what such a process involves. That is, we discover how—through value modification—personal transformation takes place at the individual level. The change that follows from value-modification encourages the development of a different character and motivates different ways of living and valuing. Without changing our values, we cannot change how we live, nor can we hope to change the larger structures and forces that shape our identities, relationships, and possibilities.

More specifically, Stein shows us how reiterative empathy serves to make the choice to change not an individualistic decision (although it is borne by individuals), but instead reflects our ties to others and to the world. Recalling how reiterative empathy allows us to deepen or challenge our self-image, we learn from Stein that it is through our encounters with others that the impetus for change in ourselves and our lives can even arise and become the basis for self-formation. Consider the well-meaning white person who believes that they are not racist. Through an interaction with another person they may discover their own racism, and this expanded self-knowledge may be the impetus for change. Robin DiAngelo describes such a moment for herself when her colleague pointed out to her that her carefulness at not making a racist mistake is not only evident to others but is an expression of her own internalized racism, one which motivated reserved and cold behavior toward people of color. As DiAngelo (2016) writes:

> I suddenly felt *uncovered* as a white person. I realized that I expected my friend to see me as I saw myself—outside of race. I also had a sudden realization of what it must look like for people of color when whites are being careful around them. We look stiff, uncomfortable, uptight, and reserved. As I pictured myself being careful around people of color in this way, I also saw why they experienced that as racism. I certainly wasn't warm, relaxed, sincere, or open when I was being careful. (241)

From Stein's account of reiterative empathy, then, we see that it is because we exist with others that we may want to change, insofar as it is through reiterative empathy that we discover characteristics in us that we do not find valuable. Yet we also see that wanting to change must also come from within us in the form of an inner commitment to different values and an attitudinal shift that supports the rooting of new values (and the uprooting of stale values).

From Stein we also discover how value-modification is both the process for self-formation and can be deliberately appropriated as a tool for personal development. Once we become aware of how self-formation works—namely, through value-modification—we can take up this process deliberately. Indeed, Stein insists that our freedom as human beings comes in the form of self-formation, and that our freedom is intertwined with our responsibility for how we form ourselves.[21] In other words, we assume our responsibility for ourselves when we deliberately engage in self-formation, and this is something that we accomplish through value-modification, through confirming, modifying, or negating values depending upon our larger views on who we want to be and how we want to live in the world with others.

For this reason, I suggest that explicitly addressing self-formation through value-modification is a useful tool for critical phenomenology. This account answers questions concerning our internal motivation for wanting to change how we live and respond to the world we live in. In addition, once we become explicitly aware of the process, we can develop value-modification as a strategy and inquire directly into what it takes to truly supplant unhelpful or oppressive values. In short, as a project, value-modification continues the critical phenomenological project, for it provides tools to effect the transformation that critical phenomenology seeks and promises.

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[21] "What does it mean that the human is responsible for himself? It means that it is up to him what he is and that it is demanded of him to make something certain out of himself: He can and should form himself" (Stein 1994, 65; my translation).

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